

SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND CONCERNS
Arkwood Site
Omaha, Arkansas
November 1986

Community interviews were conducted on November 3, 4, and 5, 1986, with residents who live near the site and with local officials. These interviews provided information about issues of concern to the community regarding the Arkwood site. The following summary was developed from these interviews.

BACKGROUND

The 15-acre Arkwood site is located 0.5 miles southwest of Omaha, in Boone County, Arkansas. There are 191 people living in Omaha. The site was used as a wood preserving operation by Arkwood, Inc., for approximately 13 years; operations ceased in 1984. Two wood preserving mixtures were used at the site: one used creosote and the other used pentachlorophenol (PCP). The original operators of the facility, Hallie C. Ormond and C.C. "Bud" Grisham, reportedly disposed of liquid waste from the preserving operation into a sinkhole on the site and into a ditch near a railroad located adjacent to the site. In 1971, Arkwood, Inc., stopped using the sinkhole to dump liquid waste.

Mass Merchandisers, Inc. (MMI), leased the land and acquired all corporate assets of the Arkwood operation in 1973. MMI continued operations until 1984, when the lease on the property expired and operations were discontinued. MMI has since agreed to conduct remedial actions at the site.

Little public attention was focused on the Arkwood site until 1981, when complaints were received from several residents that their private wells were contaminated. MMI tested the wells, replaced contaminated wells with new ones, and eventually purchased the property of one affected resident. Information provided during community interviews indicated that some residents living near the site were aware of potential problems from site contamination but were not concerned that there was an immediate threat to their health or welfare. Several individuals who were interviewed expressed the opinion that if the problem were serious, some action would already have been taken at the site.

While concerns of residents living near the site were focused on potential problems with site contamination, residents of nearby Omaha were more concerned about their inability to develop the site for some other industrial purpose. Developers of a large chicken feed

operation--originally planned for the Arkwood site--decided to build their facility in another town when the site was placed on the National Priorities List. Several officials expressed concern that economic development in Omaha would be hindered by having Arkwood designated as a Superfund site.

Few of those interviewed knew much about the site, other than that it used to be a wood preserving operation. There has been little coverage in the local media, and no organized public information activities have been conducted. It was reported that there are no organized environmental or citizen groups concerned about the site. MMI has notified some local residents of test results of samples taken from their private wells. While the level of community concern about the site cannot be classified as high, most of those interviewed were interested in what the potential hazards may be and how the site's Superfund designation may affect the future of Omaha.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Several major issues and concerns regarding the site were expressed during community interviews.

Issue: Economic development is crucial for Omaha to survive. Will the Arkwood site stymie future development in the community?

Several interviewees stated that the failure to locate the feed plant in Omaha was a serious blow to the community. Arkwood's designation as a Superfund site appeared to be viewed by some as an added burden--one they'd rather not be saddled with. It was reported that some people thought the Superfund designation was a trick used to take Omaha out of contention for the feed facility. One local official stated that they had tried to get the Arkansas Department of Pollution Control and Ecology to keep the site under its control rather than have it declared a Superfund site. As one official stated, "If we can get it cleaned up, something's (industry) going to go in there." Some area residents reportedly blame EPA and MMI for the failure to locate the feed plant in Omaha.

Also with regard to economic development, Omaha has recently received a federal grant to expand its water system. Municipal water will soon be available to the vicinity of the Arkwood site. It was stated that this should further stimulate economic development.

The community of Omaha was reported to be an enterprise zone where businesses are encouraged to locate by receiving tax breaks.

Issue: There is open access to the site. Community events are held there.

Recently, three turkey shoots have been held at the Arkwood site: two by the senior class of the Omaha Public School and one by the Omaha Fire Department. It was also reported that citizens were hauling fill dirt from the site for personal use. The site is not fenced, and the gates were observed by community relations personnel to be open. No warning signs were posted at the site other than a sign at the entrance that stated "Not Responsible For Accidents." Nearby residents also reported that people use the site to "race" four-wheel-drive vehicles. One interviewee stated that a warning sign was needed to keep people out.

Issue: Remedial actions need to proceed quickly while money is available.

MMI reportedly has set aside stock in a trust fund to cover the cost of remedial actions at the site. It was reported that this trust fund will expire in 3 years. One interviewee asked why MMI wasn't just allowed to clean up the site since they had the money. Why EPA is spending money studying the site instead of cleaning it up is likely to emerge as an issue.

Issue: Could contamination from the site affect Table Rock Lake?

Table Rock Lake is a major recreational resource in the area of the Arkwood site. The lake is used for fishing, swimming, and boating. Crickett Creek drains from the site in the direction of Table Rock Lake. Several individuals interviewed expressed concern that Table Rock Lake could be affected by the site. "It's a wonder it doesn't kill the fish in the lake," expressed one citizen.

Issue: Water running in a stream adjacent to Crickett Road has a strong chemical smell. Does this pose any hazard to area residents?

A small stream, reported by MMI to be contaminated, runs from the site downhill adjacent to Crickett Road. One resident reported that her children liked to play in this stream and that it was difficult to keep them out of it.

Issue: Many residents living near the site depend on private water or springs for potable water. Is this water safe to drink? Some residents reported receiving information about sampling results; others reported they were not receiving information.

It appears that no organized system has been established to disseminate information to residents whose wells have been sampled. Some residents reported that they are receiving information. Residents who had not received information were concerned that contamination had been detected and they weren't being told.

Issue: Limestone formations underlying Boone County result in many caverns underground. Contamination could travel a long way in underground caverns.

A concern was expressed that if contamination were dumped into a sinkhole, it could travel a great distance from the site. County officials stated they recently performed a study with dye to track potential migration paths of contamination from county landfills; dye was discovered 12 to 15 miles from where it was introduced into a cavern system.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- o As previously mentioned, Omaha has recently received a federal grant to expand its municipal water system. With this expansion, which is expected to occur during 1987, the municipal water system will be capable of supplying water to the Arkwood vicinity.
- o The Omaha Public School is a focal point for the community. It is a good location for public meetings and for an information repository. Donna Dees is the contact person at the school.
- o Springfield, Missouri, television stations provide more coverage in the Boone County area than the Little Rock television stations. Most area residents watch transmissions out of Springfield instead of Little Rock.
- o Demolition and removal actions have been occurring at the site. Buildings have been dismantled and removed. Soils appear to have been covered with fill and grass seed.
- o School board meetings are held on the second Monday of every month. The school superintendent requested that the school board be briefed on the situation at the Arkwood site.
- o The county sanitarian is not kept apprised of activities at the Arkwood site. The county sanitarian receives most of the calls from local residents who are concerned about the site.
- o The county recently did some sampling of surface waters in the Omaha area; Cricket Creek had unusually high levels of coliform and other bacteria.
- o The Omaha Public School publishes a parents' bulletin that could be used to announce upcoming events and provide information to the community.

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OUTLINE OF ACTIVITIES DURING COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS
FOR THE ARKWOOD SITE

November 3, 1986

12:00 p.m.

Bob Barker
Vice President, Support Systems
Mass Merchandisers, Inc.
Box 790
Harrison, Arkansas 72602
(501) 741-3425

Discussed history of site and
community interviews. Also conducted
tour of the vicinity of the site.

3:00 p.m.

Merle Villines
Boone County Justice of the Peace
Route 1
Box 103 A
Omaha, Arkansas 72602
501/426-3416

Discussed history of the site and
concerns of the community and mentioned
other members of the community we
should talk to.

4:30 p.m.

Jake Arnold
Mayor of Omaha
City Offices
Omaha, Arkansas 73602
501/426-3388

Discussed history of site and general
concerns of the citizens of Omaha.
Explained the program and the expected
activities at the site.

November 4, 1986

8:00 a.m.

Bobby J. Malone
Boone County Agricultural Extension
Agent
P.O. Box 848
Harrison, Arkansas 72601
501/741-6168

Discussed the concerns of county
residents regarding the site and the
concerns of Omaha residents
specifically. Also discussed the
history of the site and the general
awareness of the problem.

9:00 a.m.

Clifford Tomlinson
Boone County Judge
P.O. Box 96
Harrison, Arkansas 72601
501/741-5760

Discussed who was concerned about the site. Note that the new county judge, elected on November 4, 1986, is Cliff Gale.

10:30 a.m.

(b) (6)

No phone

Discussed concerns of residents living near the site. Discussed history of the site and future activities that are scheduled. Also identified other residents to interview for community relations plan.

12:00 p.m.

Pee Wee Widner
Kerr & McGee Service Station
Highway 65
Omaha, Arkansas 72602
No phone

Charles "Bob" Creager
P.O. Box 264
Omaha, Arkansas 72602

Conducted interview at the Kerr and McGee Service Station, a community gathering spot. Spoke with several men at the gas station owned by Mr. Widner. Discussed the history of the site and concerns of the community. Questions were asked about the health effects of chemicals from the site.

1:00 p.m.

(b) (6)

Discussed the history of the site, recent activities at the site, and concerns that area residents have. Also identified other residents to speak with.

2:00 p.m.

John Roberts
Omaha Water Department
P.O. Box 55
Omaha, Arkansas 72602
501/426-5395

Discussed history of the site and schedule of future activities. EPA requested and received permission to use store to distribute information about the site. Established that the Omaha Public School is the best location for an information repository.

2:30 p.m.

Dr. Bill Lewis
Superintendent of Omaha Public School
P.O. Box 249
Omaha, Arkansas 72602
501/426-3366

Discussed the site and the role of the school in the community. Were requested to provide a briefing for school board officials at a meeting to be held on December 8, 1986. Agreed that an information repository would be established at the school.

5:00 p.m.

(b) (6)

Made an appointment with (b) (6) to discuss community concerns about the site.

Waited at (b) (6) home until 5:30; never showed up. Left package of informational materials.

November 5, 1986

8:00 a.m.

Paul Roten
Mike Youngblood
Bloom County Sanitarians
201 North Vine
Harrison, Arkansas 72602
501/741-3505

Discussed the history of the site and the county's involvement. Discussed concerns related to the site.

10:00 a.m.

Attempted to locate (b) (6) and (b) (6). High water from three days of rain made driving back roads more difficult. Did find (b) (6) residence, but he wasn't home. Left package of informational materials.

In addition to conducting the preceding community interviews, EPA established information repositories at the following locations:

Boone County Library
Marilyn Smith
221 West Stephenson
Harrison, Arkansas 72601
501/741-3665

Boone County Courthouse
David Witty, Boone County Clerk
P.O. Box 846
Harrison, Arkansas 72604
501/741-8428

Omaha Public School Library
Donna Dees
P.O. Box 249
Omaha, Arkansas 72602
501/426-3366

Local radio stations were also identified:

KZRO
Highway 65 North
Harrison, Arkansas 72601
501/741-1300

KHOZ
1 Radio Avenue
Harrison, Arkansas 72601
501/741-2301

KCWD
P.O. Box 850
Harrison, Arkansas 72601
501/741-1402

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